

“YOU’RE A VERY SMART PERSON BUT YOU’RE ALSO A WOMAN”: PORTRAYALS OF GENDER MESSAGES IN TELEVISION SITCOMS

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Studies have shown that media exposure affects people’s internalization of gender roles, especially when the shows are perceived as realistic (Behm-Morawitz, Lewallen, & Miller, 2015). Compliments, teases, and put-downs reinforce what is valued for each gender (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006). Research on the implications of different types of compliments found that compliments about appearance negatively impact cognitive function (Kahalon, Shnabel, & Becker, 2018). Within relationship conflicts, different individual and communal strategies are endorsed, depending on the genders involved (Keener & Strough, 2017). This study involves a descriptive longitudinal content analysis of these gender factors, analyzing 84 situational comedies from the archive of the Center for Research on the Effects of Television (CRETV) at Ithaca College. Programs were selected from 10 different stations videotaped by CRETV during 1985-2016. Historical comparisons were based on the year the program was originally aired (ranging from the 1970s to 2016). Content was coded for incidents of compliments, teases, put-downs, and conflicts within adult interactions for relationships including friends, family, romantic partners, and co-workers. All interactions were also coded for the character’s gender, race/ethnicity, and occupation. Findings showed that women received more compliments than men, especially about appearance. Men gave and received more teases than women and occupied higher positions than women in the workforce. Additional findings, including the nature of put-downs and conflicts (including who won) and a qualitative analysis of specific gender messages, will also be reported.